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33]

[34]

INTRODUCTION TO No. II.

Wiggins' Inn, Long Island, May 20, 1817.

THIS particular Number is republished here, for the reasons stated in the last number. The meeting on PORTSDOWN HILL was a thing so striking, that it produced a very great effect all through the south of England; and there is no doubt, that if the liberty of the country had not been demolished, as it was, in a few days afterwards, similar meetings would have taken place in Sussex, Wiltshire, and Dorsetshire. The people of America can form no idea of the *importance* of these meetings in England, especially if conducted with order and ability, as they all have been, during the last year. The effect produced by an able and eloquent speech, at such a meeting, *must be seen to be believed*. The enthusiasm of the people did not arise from *folly*, but from the conviction produced by argument. The knowledge, which they had so suddenly acquired, they were proud of. They were so grateful to those who, at the end of twenty-five years of delusion, had let them into a clear view of the truth, that there was no bounds to the popularity of the leaders in the cause of reform; and the boroughmongers trembled in every limb of their body. The people changed *all at once*, to the utter astonishment of the usurpers of their rights, who could hardly believe their eyes and ears. After so many years of delusion, what must have been the dread of the deluders, when they read in the public prints the speeches delivered at the meetings in Scotland! Those most argumentative and eloquent speeches, which certainly surpassed any thing of the kind in England, were followed by resolutions and petitions, which

discovered an extent of knowledge as to the laws of the land, the nature and tendency of taxation, the state of the finances, the causes of national misery, the real objects of the late wars, the disgraceful deeds at the close of the war, the ultimate object of the holy league; and, in short, as to every department of politics; an extent of knowledge, and a correctness of reasoning, and a justness of sentiment, never surpassed in any writings that ever came from the press of any country in the world. And, upon these occasions, the orators were merely *tradesmen*, and those by no means of the richest class. It was in Scotland where the doctrine was first promulgated at a public meeting, and in a formal resolution, that the debt was not due from the people, who, not having been represented, had not borrowed and expended the loans. It was in Somersetshire where the war was first designated as *disgraceful* in its termination, and the intended Waterloo monument a *monument of shame*; but, it was in Scotland where the first man was found openly to accuse Wellington of the *murder of Ney*, and it was in Scotland where a meeting was first found to resolve that it was "a foul murderer to gratify the blood-thirsty disposition of a set of cowardly despots." Well might the boroughmongers be *alarmed*. Well might they, in their report, say that the *character* of the people had been *wholly changed*.* And, do they think that they can change it back again? As easily might they make the Thames run from London into Oxfordshire!

Hampshire contains no great *Hives of Men*. It has no manufactures. It consists very much of *Forests* and *Downs*. To call a meeting, therefore, on the top of a *naked hill*, and in the month of Feb-

ruary, when the wind, even on the mildest day of that season, is sharp in the extreme, and when it was impossible for any considerable number of persons to find shelter in case of rain or snow, was the true way to put the spirit of the county, and of all England, to the test. All the powers of the government, direct and indirect, were employed to prevent people from going to this meeting; and yet, out of a population (of both sexes and all ages) of 350,000, we met from 30,000 to 40,000 men on Portsdown Hill. The reader will easily guess how large a portion this was of all the *able-bodied male population*. Some, to be sure, came out of Sussex; but still the proportion was very great. The sight was the finest that my eyes ever beheld. It was an assemblage of sober, anxious people, dressed as they always dress themselves in England on a Sunday. The spot was the finest in the whole world. To the east, the richest part of Sussex; to the west, the New Forest, and all the fine woods about Southampton; to the north, the valley of Southwick, extending for ten miles towards the Surrey Hills; and to the south, the town and harbour of Portsmouth, Spithead, the Isle of Wight, and the sea. When my LORD COCHRANE, during one of the finest speeches I ever heard, turned round and pointed towards the fleet, and reminded us, that it was *there*, and not to *standing armies*, that we ought to look for defence, observing, at the same time, how hardly the poor sailors had been used, I never witnessed so great a sensation as was produced. To be present at that moment only was worth a journey of a hundred miles. If the boroughmongers had been there, they would have seen, that they must give way, sooner or later.

And, was it a *rabble* who met on Portsdown hill? Will corruption's agents at New-York and elsewhere, say that this

was an assemblage of *rabble*? Let them read the petition that was agreed to; let them look at the manner in which it was signed; let them form an idea of such a number of men coming from so great a distance; and then, let them endeavour to make the world believe, that it was a *despicable rabble*, and that their friends, the boroughmongers, the oppressors of England, have *nothing to fear*. But, above all, let them *answer the petition*. Let us hear, which we never yet have, what they have to say in *answer* to us. Let them, with all their pretended superiority of *education*, produce something to surpass this petition in any respect. Even the corrupt crew assembled at St. Stephen's were compelled to be silent while this petition was read, and, not a man of them had the courage to say a word against it.

This petition, as I said before, contains the case of the reformers of the United Kingdom. We ask for all that it prays for, and no more; we seek for nothing more; but, all that it contains we do seek for, and have it we will, in spite of all that corruption can do to oppose us. For myself and my sons, we are not come here to be *idle*. We could have been *idle* and *rich* at home. We are very grateful to the good and brave people of America, for having preserved freedom here for us to avail ourselves of; but, it is not *safety* alone that we have sought. I repeat, that we could have been both *safe* and *rich*, if we had been willing to sell our honour, and become the silent spectators of our country's sufferings and degradation. We are come here to *labour* effectually in our country's cause; and, in the next number, which will be the first which has been sent to England for publication, the reader will see in what way we mean to labour.

WM. COBBETT.

FEBRUARY 11, 1817.

A LETTER
TO THE
PEOPLE OF HAMPSHIRE.

On the Portsdown Meeting.—Hampshire Petition.—Mr. Chute's charge against the Meeting.—What does wild innovation mean?—A list of innovations.—False charges of MR. PERRY against Reformers.—Surrender of Sinecures.—Political Clubs and Combinations.

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London, 11th Feb. 1817.

COUNTRYMEN,—That Petition, which was agreed to unanimously by more than thirty thousand of us, on Monday, on Portsdown Hill, and signed upon the spot, on tables placed in the open air, at nearly a mile from a house or any other building, having now been, by Lord Cochrane, presented to the House, and received by that House, that Petition having now become a part of the Records of that House, it shall now be put into print. And this is necessary for several reasons, among which are the following: There are many persons in our county, who were unable to be present, from the circumstances of distance, or of inability to spare the time. It is right that these persons should have an opportunity of seeing what was agreed on by the Meeting. Numerous persons were, doubtless, made afraid to attend the Meeting by the papers, which were published and posted up under the name of the *Magistrates*, as well as by the calling out of troops, and the swearing in of special constables! Good God! troops and special constables to prevent a riot upon the bare down! Then, as the enemies of our freedom and the friends of all that is injurious to us, have had the impudence, the unprincipled audacity, to tell the people, that the ob-

ject of the Meeting was to inculcate seditious principles, to *mislead* the ignorant, to *seduce* the unsuspecting multitude; as these persons have chosen thus to speak of the acts and intentions of those who called the Meeting, and who took a leading part in it, it is right that all the people of the county should have a fair opportunity of seeing what was DONE on this memorable occasion, when not fewer than five thousand people actually signed a petition in the open air, on the top of the loftiest down in our county, and when five or six times that number of names would have been signed, if tables of a sufficient extent could have been provided. It is right that all the people in the county should be able to read at their homes, that which the greater part of them, from distance of dwelling, and many from the power of threats, were unable to go to hear read at Portsdown. There were some persons, who threatened their labourers with being turned off, if they attended the meeting; tradesmen and publicans were also threatened; and yet, such a meeting was never seen, either in Hampshire or any other County, especially when we consider, that a great part of the people, who were assembled, came from distances between four miles and forty miles, with all the toil of inconveniences and expenses of travelling, and with all the risks as to weather, at the most inclement season of the year. The very circumstance of the place of the meeting was a complete test of the sincerity, the earnestness, the zeal, the public spirit of the persons who composed that Meeting. These are amongst the reasons for my embodying the Petition in this my letter to the People of my own County. I have other reasons to state, which shall follow the insertion.

To the Honourable the Commons of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland in Parliament Assembled.

The Petition of the people of Hampshire, in General Meeting Assembled, on Portsdown Hill, on Monday, the tenth day of February.

1817.

Humbly Sheweth,

1. That your Petitioners, fully participating in the dreadful sufferings of their country, and yielding to no part of His Majesty's subjects in their anxiety for the preservation of its tranquillity and the restoration of its happiness, beg leave to express their hope, that they shall not meet with rebuke, but with a kind reception and a patient hearing from your Honourable House, while they, at so trying and awful a season, approach your Honourable House with a respectful, though frank, statement of their Rights, their Wrongs, their Apprehensions and their Prayers.

2. Amongst all the Rights of your Petitioners, there is none which they more highly value than the right of Petition; because, if deprived of that right, your Petitioners can see no security whatever for their property, their liberty, or their lives, and can see no reason why your Petitioners should, in case of such deprivation, be objects of envy to the miserable inhabitants of Bastiles and of the dungeons of the Inquisition, who are not only doomed to perish by the hand of tyranny, but who, being forbidden to make known their injuries, have not even the poor consolation of hoping, that their sufferings will excite the pity, and the acts of their oppressors the abhorrence, of the compassionate and the just part of mankind.

3. That your Petitioners humbly request leave to state to your Honourable

House, that, to meet for the purpose of Petitioning the King, or either House of Parliament, is the undoubted right of the people of England; and that the act of parliament, commonly called the Bill of Rights (which act was only declaratory of the ancient rights of the people) enumerates, amongst the divers odious and tyrannical proceedings of King James the Second, his having violated the right of Petition; and, that it was for this, amongst other causes, that he and his family were expelled from the country and throne forever by that Glorious Revolution which exalted the present royal Family to the kingly office and crown in this country.

4. That during a part of the late wars against France, and during the Administration of the late Right Honourable William Pitt, laws were passed, which, in fact and reality, took away, as far as related to public liberty, this invaluable right for many years; and which, at the same time, most fearfully diminished the liberty of the press; and which also, by a suspension of the *Habeas Corpus*, or *Personal Safety Act*, did, in effect, place the personal freedom of every man at the absolute disposal of the Minister and the Privy Council, by whom any man, no matter who or what he might be, was liable to be sent to any prison in the kingdom for any length of time, without knowing the charge against him, without being confronted with his accusers, and without ever being, first or last, arraigned before an ordinary Judge or Jury; the consequence of which was, that many Englishmen were so imprisoned, and thereby incurred great bodily suffering; and also pecuniary ruin to themselves and their families.

5. That the pretexts for these harsh and cruel laws, were, that the populous and powerful French nation, who had just then dethroned their king, abolished all

titles of nobility, overthrown their established church, and proclaimed a Republican government, were ready with mighty armies to assist, as was asserted, numerous persons in this country, who had, it was alleged, formed designs, and both openly and secretly declared their wishes, to effect a similar revolution within this kingdom.

6. Your Petitioners beg to be permitted humbly to state to your Honourable House, that, at the present time, none of these pretexts can, with truth, be said to exist, the House of Bourbon being now restored, the people of France being now ardent admirers of the Kings and Nobles and Priests, the Holy Father being now re-instated in the plenitude of power, the flames of the Holy Inquisition being re-kindled, a Holy League being formed amongst the Sovereigns of the Continent, and all the Republics of Europe being wholly annihilated; while, in this country no one public speaker, not one writer, not one petitioner, not one man of any description (as your Petitioners believe, who can be regarded as of sane intellect, has proposed, or even hinted at any project for lessening the prerogatives of the Crown or the Privileges of the Peers, or for making any change in the affairs of the Church, except only as to the latter, that your Petitioners have heard of some proposed changes originating in your Honourable House; with regard to which changes your Petitioners presume not to attempt to interfere.

7. That your Petitioners, when called upon to submit quietly and patiently to the above-mentioned long suspension of their dearest rights, and to expend cheerfully more than a thousand millions sterling in taxes, together with nearly eight hundred millions in Debt, to enable the government to carry on wars against the Revolutionists of France, were most solemnly assured by the persons in high authority during that time, that, for those sacrifices, great as they were acknowledged to be, your Petitioners would be amply repaid by a peace which would give to your Petitioners lasting prosperity and happiness, "Indemnity for the past and security for the future;" but alas! your Petitioners have found to

their grievous disappointment, that this indemnity consists of the most distressing want and most profound misery that nation ever had to endure; and, if your Petitioners are now to look for security in another suspension (which, if adopted, they firmly believe, will have no end) of their rights, or are to be punished for exercising those rights in order to obtain what they may deem the only effectual means of removing those miseries and of preventing their return, then the reward of your Petitioners, for twenty-five years of unparalleled sacrifices, must be unparalleled and never-ending wretchedness, degradation, and shame.

8. That your Petitioners, therefore, most humbly and most earnestly hope, that your honourable House will not be induced to give your countenance to any measure, which shall, either directly or indirectly, tend to abridge the right of Petition, or any other of the rights and liberties of your Petitioners; but, on the contrary, that your honorable House will, as far as you are able, afford the suffering people relief, and guard against their experiencing such suffering in future, by measures of justice and of a conciliating character; and, your Petitioners humbly pray, that, with these ends in view, your honourable House will be pleased to originate, or to give your assent to, laws for abolishing all Sinecures, Pensions, and Grants not fully merited by well-known public services; for the reducing of all Salaries paid out of the public money, and also the interest on all the Annuities constituting the Funded Debt, so that these may be in proportion to the reduced state of the wages of labour and the profits of tradesmen and farmers; for reducing the Standing Army; and for making a Reform in your honourable House.

9. That, as to Sinecures, Pensions, and Grants, not fully merited by well-known public services, your Petitioners do hope, that, at a time like the present, your honourable House will not suppose it possible that they can be endured, especially when your honorable House sees, on the one hand, the poor-houses crowded with paupers who have seen better days, the jails swarming with debtors whom no degree

of care and industry has been able to save from ruin, whose million of starving creatures, who, when they open their eyes in the morning, know not where to find the means of breaking their fast; and, when your honorable House, turning to the other hand, sees the Sinecurists, Pensioners, and Grantees, shining with all the brilliancy of wealth, and indulging in all the enjoyments of luxury, each individual of some of whom having, as your Petitioners are able to prove at the bar of your honourable House, received, annually, more money out of the public taxes than would be sufficient to maintain a thousand of the families who largely contribute towards the paying of those taxes; nor need your Petitioners remind your Honourable House that there are some of those individuals, each of whom has, within the last thirty years, received from the aforesaid source much more than half a million of principal money, and if your Petitioners were to say nearly a million of money, their statement would only approach nearer to the truth.

10. With regard to Salaries, paid out of the Public Money, your Petitioners beg leave humbly to observe, that they have only to refer your Honourable House to your own Journals, and to the Statute Book for the space of the last twenty years, in order to afford your Honourable House ample conviction of the fact that the Salaries of the judges have been doubled, that the Salaries of the Police Justices have been greatly augmented, and that a like augmentation has taken place in almost all other Salaries, and in the pay and allowances of an enormous Military Staff Establishment, and that all these augmentations have been adopted upon the express ground of the augmentation which had taken place in the price of wages, in the price of all articles of dress, in the rents of houses and land, and in the prices of all the necessaries of life; and therefore, now, that it is notorious that these latter have all been diminished in the degree of nearly one half, your Petitioners will not insult your Honourable House by appearing to suppose that you will refuse their humble request, that the

above said salaries and pay may be immediately reduced in the same degree.

11. And, as to the interest on the annuities constituting the Funded Debt, your Petitioners, agreeing in opinion with a noble Earl of the other House of Parliament, that the currency of the Country has been changed, that the taxes, which were imposed in a currency of low value, are now collected in a currency of high value, beg leave to observe also, that the far greater part of the Debt, which was contracted in a low currency, is now paid an interest for, by the People, in a high currency, and that this, the greatest of all the causes of the Nation's ruin, has arisen from the stoppage of cash payments at the Bank of England in the year 1797; a stoppage in breach of the Charter of the Bank Company, in breach of all the laws of Debtor and Creditor, tending only to the advantage of the Bank Company itself, and solicited and procured to be sanctioned by that Company. Therefore, your Petitioners most humbly pray that the rate of interest on the Funded Debt may be immediately reduced, in such a degree that the fruit of the whole productive labour of the Country may no longer be swallowed up by the dealers in Bank Paper, or, to adopt the words of a Petition, received by the House of Commons from the Town of Leicester, at the time of the South Sea Bubble, your Petitioners most humbly implore your honourable House, "that the last drop of the nation's "blood may not be poured out to be licked up by the Cannibal's of Change Alley."

12. When your Petitioners reflect on the abhorrence in which standing armies in time of peace, were held by our ancestors, on the language of our statutes and law books upon this subject, on the boast at all former times put forward by the eulogists of our government, that a standing soldier, a barrack, a fortress, was unknown to our laws, when we reflect that the first thing in the shape of a soldier, in time of peace, that was known in England, were the twenty or thirty men, properly called yoemen of the guard, and who were commonly known by the name

of the beef-eaters; when we reflect that even these have not been known for much more than two hundred years; when we reflect on the numerous ages of happiness and renown, legal, naval, and military, which England enjoyed before that period, and which she has since enjoyed with no other army than that of the beef-eaters; when we reflect on these things, we will not affect to doubt that your Honourable House will have fully participated with us in the extreme pain which we have long felt, at seeing a regular standing army becoming by degrees a settled branch of the system of government in this country; and, therefore, your Petitioners beg leave to be permitted to assure your Honourable House, that your Honourable House can do nothing more consoling to their hearts, more cheering to their hopes, than the measures which they trust your Honourable House will speedily adopt for greatly reducing an establishment, which seems to say, that the government cannot safely confide in the People, and which, by assuming the air of menace, inevitably tends to excite resentment, and to produce violence, confusion, and bloodshed; unless it could be supposed, as we are sure that your Honourable House will not suppose, that Englishmen will in the long run, be induced to yield from motives of fear that which they are not induced to yield from motives of love to their king, and of veneration for the laws.

13. That, with regard to a Reform in your Honourable House, your Petitioners have too much respect for the laws which are passed by your Honourable House, and which your Petitioners are bound to obey, to enter into particulars as to the mode in which seats in your Honourable House are obtained, and, upon that point they only beg leave to refer your Honourable House to the transactions recorded on its own Journals, especially of the year 1809; but your Petitioners, without any desire to aggravate past and notorious occurrences, and with a confident hope of seeing the cause of such occurrences for ever removed, proceed humbly to pray, that a Reform may be adopted, upon the principles of a Bill presented to the House of Lords, by the late Duke of Richmond,

more than thirty years ago, which Bill proposed Annual Parliaments and Universal suffrage. That your Petitioners humbly request leave to represent to your Honourable House, that they can discover nothing novel, wild, or impracticable, in the duration of Parliaments and extent of Suffrage, for which they here humbly pray, because your Petitioners must have misunderstood the plain words of the ancient laws of the land if annual Parliaments be not agreeable to the very letter as well as to the spirit of those laws, and because it is a well-known maxim of the Constitution, and expressly declared in those laws, that no man shall be taxed without his own consent; and as every man now pays taxes to the amount of a large portion of his wages, your petitioners humbly presume to conclude, that any man who has attained the age of twenty-one years, is, agreeably to the above maxims and laws, entitled to have a voice in the choosing of those, who pass laws to impose taxes upon him; because, if deprived of such voice, it appears to the plain understandings of your Petitioners, that he must be taxed, if taxed at all, without his own consent. That as to the objection, founded on the supposed impracticability of taking an election, in which every man of twenty-one years should have a vote, your Petitioners can hardly believe, that your honourable House will not, at once, perceive its futurity, if your Honourable House will be pleased to consider, with what scrupulous exactness the laws passed by your Honourable House have caused the names, ages, residences, and private circumstances of the whole of the male inhabitants of this country to be ascertained, enrolled, proclaimed in the several parishes, and officially recorded, under the Militia and taxing Regulations; and, while your Petitioners are convinced that your Honourable House can have no arguments submitted to you sufficient to prove, that it is less practicable to ascertain simply the age and places of residence of the people, than it is to ascertain two facts with the addition of all the other various and ever-varying contingencies of marriage, number of children, parochial settle-

ment, previous service, pecuniary means, bodily ailments, and the like, required to be ascertained by the laws and regulations for calling men forth to serve in the Militia and Local Militia, your Petitioners have too high an opinion of the justice of your Honourable House to believe, that your Honourable House would wish, that any of those persons, who are thus liable to be called forth, at any moment, to risk their lives in defence of the country should be excluded from all share in the choosing of the persons who are to make Laws for the governing of that country; and, should any one be so little mindful of the credit due to the character of your Honourable House as to suggest to your Honourable House that any part of your humble Petitioners are persons who have nothing to lose, your petitioners beg leave to express their confidence that your Honourable House will not fail severely to rebuke those calumniators of the people, by reminding them, that the people were not told that they had nothing to lose at the time when they were called forth into military service, and to submit to all the rigour of military law, and military discipline, in order to secure the independence, and defend the property, of the country.

14. That, there is scarcely a man amongst your Petitioners who has not to lament the loss of a father, a son, an uncle, a cousin, or some beloved friend, brought to an untimely death by the late long and bloody wars; and your Petitioners, though they have hearts to feel for these losses, have, nevertheless, submitted to them, as well as to their other numerous privations, sorrows and sufferings, with the most exemplary patience and fortitude, on considerations connected with a persuasion that such sacrifices were necessary to the safety and honour of their country; but, when they hear persons bold enough to impute the present complaints and prayers of your Petitioners to the instigation of designing and evil-minded men, to perverseness or brutal ignorance in your Petitioners, or to motives other than those which your Petitioners sincerely feel and explicitly state, your Petitioners are induced humbly to hope and to pray, that your

Honourable House will be pleased to descend to become the organ of a loud and decided expression of the indignation of your Petitioners, at such epprobrious, unjust, cruel and cowardly imputations.

And your Petitioners shall ever pray,

(Signed) JOHN GOLDSMITH, Chairman.

W.M. COBBETT, Mover.

RICHARD HINGMAN, Seconder.

And by about four or five thousand others, of whom *Lord Cochrane's* name stood at the head.

Here, then, my honest, industrious, and good-tempered Countrymen; here is what was DONE upon the memorable tenth of February, 1817. It was against going to hear this that the people of the County were cautioned by some, at least, of the Magistrates; it was to prevent the riots and other acts, expected to proceed from this that troops were called out, that special constables were sworn in, and that yeomanry cavalry were brought near the spot, in one direction, from so far a distance as Farnham on the skirts of Surrey, my own native town! In proceeding towards London after the Meeting was over, I met, at Horndean, with a company of Yeomanry Cavalry, who appeared to be very merry, and one of whom, cordially shaking me by the hand, told me that they were townsmen of mine, and that while they were on Purbrook Heath, during the middle of the day, they had heard the shouts from Portsdown Hill. They showed us a ball-cartridge, with a good deal of merriment, and a gentleman who was with me, wishing to carry it off and to preserve it as a choice memorial, endeavoured to get hold of it, but brought away only the ball; this he twisted off from the powder which remained at the disposal of my townsmen, who appeared, in point of satisfaction at the result of the day's adventures, not to yield to ourselves. At Petersfield, eight miles further on, we found another detachment of Yeomanry Cavalry, some of whom formed with the townspeople a group at the Inn door, who gave us three hearty cheers at our departure.

Alas! It is not by ball-cartridges that the facts and arguments of our Petition are to be controverted, or answered, I

would beg my townsmen, the yeomanry cavalry of Farnham, and especially the fine and frank young man, who so kindly took me by the hand at Horndean, and whose father and I were probably playmates; I would beg this young man attentively to read, and candidly to weigh, every part of our Petition, and when he has done so, seriously to ask himself, whether that Petition is to be answered, or whether its principles are to be checked in their progress by the influence of the fear of ball cartridges, or by any other influence, except it be found that they will not stand the test of truth and of reason!

After so much hath been said about the *mischievous views* and the *wild projects* of the Reformers; after so much had been said about the language and the views of the Petitioners in various parts of the kingdom; and, after so much had been said, and so much more had been insinuated, to misrepresent my own particular views, I was naturally anxious that the Petition from the County to which I belong, and in which it is my bounden duty to stand forward and to be a petitioner myself; I was, under these circumstances, naturally anxious, that the Hampshire Petition should contain, not only a full statement of what I deem the grievances and the rights of the people, but also the *reasons* on which the prayers of the Petition were founded; and, to the utmost of my humble abilities, these two objects have been secured by this petition.

With a mind always open to conviction, with a willingness always to discover my errors, and a readiness always to acknowledge and to retract them, I shall very patiently listen to every thing, bearing the semblance of *reasoning* or of *fact*, that any one has to state in answer to this petition, but, I will listen, neither will you listen, to no *abuse* either of the petition or of the petitioners. And you will be as little disposed as I am to think, that the petition has been at all *answered* by Mr. CHUTE (one of the county members) saying, that the meeting was not a *County Meeting*, because it was *not called by the Sheriff*! The Sheriff may call County

Meetings if he pleases, and so may any body else. A Meeting is not less a *County Meeting* because not called by a person appointed by the Crown. The Sheriff may, probably, call a meeting soon to address the *Prince Regent*; and, if he do, I shall, if I am alive and well, certainly be at that meeting; and as it is a subject of great importance, I do most anxiously hope, that every man, who was on Portsdown Hill, on Monday last, will be at the Sheriff's Meeting. No man can go further than I am willing to go in expressing abhorrence at any unlawful act, and especially at acts aimed against the person or the character of his Royal Highness; but, it is at the same time, of the utmost importance, that the character of those, who best seek the safety of the throne, by endeavouring to restore to the people their rights and their happiness, should not have their characters aspersed upon such occasions. Therefore, if a *County Meeting* should be called for this purpose, I do hope, that we shall all flock to the spot, *be it where it will*; for, this is a matter, at this moment, of as great consequence as the subject of our Petition. Indeed, I am so well convinced of the propriety of the County's meeting on this subject, I shall regard it as so great a shame for the County to be *silent*, that, if the Sheriff do not call a meeting very speedily, and, indeed, if I find that he has not done it in the next Sunday's *County Papers*, I shall propose to some other gentlemen, to join me in a Requisition to him, with a view to that end. For, Hampshire-men, though they yield to no part of their countrymen in a love of liberty, and in a determination to obtain, by lawful means, a redress of their grievances, entertain no desire to see their sovereign ill treated, and will, I am very sure, cordially join in reprobating, not only the act itself, but also the base and foul calumnies of place-hunters and factious writers, like the *Morning Chronicle*, who have, for years, been dealing in such calumnies, to which calumnies doubtless, we may fairly ascribe, in part at least, the late disgraceful outrage. The conduct of the Parliamentary Reformers, has been

marked by every feature, which is the contrary of factiousness and disloyalty. They have uniformly avoided expressing any wish to intermeddle with the prerogatives of the Crown; they have called for no changes in the king's servants; they have aimed no shafts against the character or conduct of his Royal Highness, the Regent, or against any of his family. And, indeed, it would be folly so to do, because it would be doing just so much towards the defeating of their own end, which is to obtain a Parliament in which they shall be fully and fairly represented; and, if they were to mix this object up with any views as to the Crown and its prerogatives, they would justly be charged with a desire to make *innovations*.

Besides, my friends, it is not the Prince Regent's own expenses; it is not the expenses of any of his family that press so heavily upon us. All their expenses might, I really think, be reasonably reduced at this time, and, I hope, they will be; but, we ought to be *just*, and we will be *just*, and that being our intention as well as our duty, we should not suffer ourselves to be duped by those who hold the Royal Family up as a sort of shield to protect *themselves* against the well-founded complaints of the people.

The charges against the Reformers, of being engaged in stirring up the people to *riot and bloodshed* are fast dying away. The greedy feeders on the nation's labour, who have been endeavouring to array themselves under the name of *Declarers* against the people's voice, will soon, I fancy, be glad to hide their heads. We have fairly beaten them down, and overlaid them with fact and argument. Their falsehoods have been crammed back into their very throats. Another sad disturbance has, it seems, taken place in *Wales*; but, not among Parliamentary Reformers. No; but amongst poor unfortunate workmen, in a half starving state, for whom no employment can be found, in whose bosom no hope has been excited by public meetings, whose minds have not been sobered by the perusal of papers inculcating peace and patience, and whose energies have not been directed

to any rational end. Will not this fact tend to silence our calumniators? Will they still accuse the Reformers with the riots that have taken place? The placards issued under the name of the Magistrates in Hampshire, asserted, that "*riot and bloodshed*" had been the consequences of "*meetings held in other places for similar purposes*." The Magistrates of Hampshire, did not condescend to say where those riots and that *bloodshed* had taken place. The where and the when would have puzzled them in the finding out. Mr. JELlico, the Iron Founder, was, we are told, very active in his endeavours to prevent persons attending the Meeting; but Mr. JELlico's reasons for thus opposing our "*wild schemes*," were not communicated to us. As it is probable that they were very cogent, I will endeavour to find them as soon as I can spare the time.

The things we pray for are called *innovations*. The word *innovation*, which merely means the introduction of *something new*, is a very pretty word, though it only serves as a blind on this occasion. To make a dirty narrow street into a wide clean street is an *innovation*; but there is no harm in it. To make an impassable lane into a turnpike road is an innovation. So that an innovation may be a *good thing*, though as in the case of the enclosure and private appropriation of the beautiful Forest of Bere, which has destroyed hundreds of thousands of growing oaks, within a few miles of our greatest naval arsenal, in order to make way for the growth of miserable crops of straw, with little or no corn, an innovation may be a *very bad thing*. But, at any rate, we propose *no innovations*. We propose nothing that has not been before in our country. We propose *annual parliaments*, and that every man who pays taxes shall have a vote in choosing those who lay the taxes on us; and we are ready to prove that these are not *new*, but very old indeed.

But, for the argument's sake, if we did propose an innovation, I should be glad to know what objection that would be to us, supposing the proposition to be good

in itself? Is every thing to go on undergoing changes except such changes as may favour the people of England? To hear this objection, especially in the House of Commons, one would imagine, that our laws had never been changed since the island was first settled by a civilized people. Far different however is the fact, as a short list will show.

1. There is now a law to *License* printing presses, to punish men who make use of presses not licenced. Every Printer, Type-maker, and Press-maker is compelled, under a heavy penalty, to keep an account of all the authors and others who employ them, and to be ready to give evidence against them, if called upon.—Is not this an *innovation*?
2. Every Printer is compelled to print his name, and place of abode, at the bottom of every thing that he prints; he is compelled to keep a copy, in order to its being produced, if called for, to the Secretary of State; any publisher, printer, and proprietor of a newspaper, are compelled to go to a place called the Stamp Office, and there *swear*, that they are so, and they are also obliged to make oath to their several places of abode; and the publisher is obliged to deposit one copy of every number of the paper in the Stamp Office, where it is ready to be produced against the parties, at any time, in prosecutions for libel; so that the parties are thus compelled, under heavy penalties, to furnish, in case of prosecution, evidence against themselves.
3. *Special Juries* are also an innovation, especially in matters of a criminal nature. A Special Jury consists of 48 men *nominated* and *appointed* by the *Master of the Crown-Office*. Of these 48 the man who is to be tried for a libel may strike off 12, while the Attorney General's man, or the Government prosecutor does the same, and the first 12 who come into the box out of the remaining 24 make the Jury to try the cause. But, what is the use of this *striking off*, when the Master of

the Crown-Office *appoints the whole*? Observe what a difference here is from the case of a *Common Jury*, who consist of a great number of men, called together by the summonses of the Constables from all parts of a County, all the names of whom are put into a box, and, when a man is going to be tried, the ballots are taken out promiscuously, and the first twelve are the Jury to try the case. Here the Officers of the Crown have no power of choosing; but, in the other case, they have the full power of *nominating* and *appointing* the Jury; that is to say, out of all the men in Middlesex, for instance, who are in the Sheriff's Book, they may take, and do take, just the 48 which they please, and no other. And this is the sort of Jury, by which every man is tried, if he be prosecuted by the Attorney General. And, you will bear in mind, that Juries were intended to protect men's lives and property against any undue bias that might exist in persons in authority.

4. The stamping of newspapers, and, thereby, checking the circulation of information as to matters connected with politics.
5. The compelling of all publishers of *pamphlets* to carry a copy of each and lodge it at a government office, in order that the government may have it in its power to know what every man is about in this respect; in order that it may know who to *prosecute*, if it thinks proper.
6. The Attorney General's powers are tremendous. He can at any time, bring an accusation against *any body*, by what is called an *ex-officio information*; he can compel the party to plead; he can bring him to trial or he can put the trial off as long as he pleases, and may keep a charge hanging over a man's head during the whole life of such man. When he has brought the man into court, he can stop the proceedings upon the spot; he can go on with them; he can, in any stage of the matter, forgive the man by wiping away the charge against him. He can,

if two men publish the same thing, prosecute both, and let the one off without actually bringing him to punishment, while he brings the other to punishment, and this was actually done only about five or six years ago. After a man has even been convicted on an information of the Attorney-General, the latter can even then let him off by not bringing him up for judgment; or, he may let the poor wretch remain in a state of uncertainty *for years*, and, after that, bring him up and have him punished. He may commence a prosecution against a man this year, as was done by the late Lord Thurlow against Mr. Horne Tooke, and never bring him to trial for years afterwards, and never at all if he does not like it.—But, these powers, though they are all *innovations* on the Common and Ancient Law of the Land, have received, of very late years, and in the Attorney Generalship of Sir Vicary Gibbs, a most dangerous addition; namely, the power of *holding to bail*, or *sending to prison* in default of bail, the moment an information *ex officio* is filed; and, observe, that this may be done too, and it actually was done by Sir Vicary Gibbs in the year 1809, *without, at last bringing the party to trial!* He filed an *ex officio* information against a man, he called the man up to give bail, the bail was not to be had, the man was **ACTUALLY IMPRISONED**, and he NEVER WAS BROUGHT TO TRIAL ON THE INFORMATION! This terrible power has not existed more than about *eight or nine years*.— Yet, our revilers and slanderers talk about the *danger* of our *innovations*, as they have the impudence to call them. But, about the innovations that I am here talking of, they say not a single word.

7. In all informations, such as I have been speaking of, for what is called *libels*, that is to say, writings which the Attorney General chooses to prosecute men for, the charge against the accused was, formerly, that he had put forth something **FALSE, scandalous,**

and *malicious*, but, of late years, that is to say, within about fifty years, the word *false*, has been *left out*; so that though the publication may be all *true*, it, nevertheless, according to this new practice, may be very *criminal*.

All the above things, except some of the powers of the Attorney General, are *innovations* of very modern date. Special Juries, as applicable to criminal cases, are not more than of about sixty or seventy years standing; and all the Licensing of Presses, and Stamping Laws, as far as relates to the press, are of not more than twenty-five years standing, except a trifling part of the newspaper stamp.

8. The *whole* of the *Game Laws* are an *innovation* upon the Common and ancient law of the Land; many of them are of very modern date; and that law, by which a man may be **TRANSPORTED** for being engaged in poaching, after a certain hour in the evening, and before a certain hour in the morning, was passed *only last year!*—Is not this an innovation?

9. The *whole* of the *Excise Laws* are an *innovation* upon the Common and ancient law of the Land, which held, that *every man's house was his castle*, whereas these laws authorize officers to go into many persons' houses at any hour of the day or of the night; and, in some cases, the Excise Officers may actually *keep the keys of people's premises!* And, though some of these laws are of more than a century standing, the far greater part of them, including the penalties of fine, imprisonment, banishment, and even death, are of modern date, and are a complete and most awful *innovation*.

10. Paper-money, and all the laws relating to it, all the hanging laws for *forgery*, all the whole train of this terrible system, is an entire *innovation*; things wholly unknown a hundred and twenty years ago.

11. The **Debt, the Funds, the Stocks**, and all the laws relating to them, the mortgaging of the taxes; are all an *innovation*.

12. The **Civil List** is an *innovation*.

The kings of England maintained their splendour out of the produce of their own Royal Domains, such as the New Forest, &c. They had now and then grants from the people, but in the main, they lived upon their own revenues. It is not till very lately that this has been changed, and, in my opinion, to the great injury of the king and his family, whose estate has been taken by what is called “the public,” but of the *produce* of which estate I can never discover that “the public” receive any thing worth speaking of,—Is not this an innovation?

13. The *Police Justices* and all the whole of that establishment is an innovation. England was, until the time of Pitt, too happy to need an establishment of this sort. Ordinary Justices of the Peace, Gentlemen of the Counties, Constables, Tything-men, Mayors, Aldermen, Bailiffs, Beadles: These were quite sufficient, without resorting to a *Police*, the very sound of which word was hateful to English ears, because it was well known to be a dark and inexorable instrument of tyranny in France and other despotic countries. About twenty-three years ago our Police was established; that is to say, Justices were hired at a *salary*, and Officers hired to serve under them at a salary. These Justices may be *turned off* and deprived of their salaries whenever the Crown is advised to turn them off. They have not only the power to take up and commit thieves, and robbers, and murderers, but to *license public houses*, to *refuse licenses to public houses without cause assigned*, to impose fines under the Excise Laws, Game Laws, Stamp Laws, Hawker's Act, and, in short, to do every thing that the ordinary Justices of the Peace may do: and, as they are very *numerous*, and are enabled to act as Justices of the Peace throughout the Counties of Middlesex, Surrey, Kent, and Essex, they have in fact, a most monstrous degree of power. They can, and do, sit at the *Quarter Sessions* in all those Counties, and, of course, they possess

more power in all these Counties than can reasonably be expected to be possessed by all the Gentlemen in the same counties, who serve as Justices of the Peace without salaries. Here is an *innovation*, if people want to find innovations to cry out against!—If the necessity of the times; if the vast increase of the Metropolis; if these require a set of Thief-takers by profession, and persons to be paid *Salaries* to exercise certain powers of Magistrates, surely it cannot be necessary, that these same persons should have the power of licensing and refusing to license public houses, that they should have cognizance of cases under the Excise Laws, the Stamp Laws, and the Poor Laws.—It is said, in the newspapers, that these powers are going to be taken from them by act of parliament; but, as the thing now stands, this alone is an innovation of most fearful magnitude and most terrible effect.

14. I could make this dozen of innovations into twenty dozen; but, at present I will stop with the *Bank of England* and its *Cash Stoppage*. The Bank itself (the greatest evil that this or any other nation ever experienced) is only one hundred and twenty years old; and we Reformers ask for nothing that is not five times as old. But the *Cash Stoppage* is the thing, and that is only *twenty years old*, come the 27th of this very month of February. The Bank had always put forth notes, which were *payable to the bearer, on demand, in Gold or Silver*. But, in February, 1797, when people began to like Gold and Silver better than the notes of the Bank, they went to the Bank to get their money. The Bank Company, that is to say, the Governor, Directors, and the other persons who had put forth the Bank notes, found that they had not wherewith to pay their notes. They were very *hard run*, and they applied to the Minister, Mr. Pitt, to inform him that they were in alarm for the *safety of their concern*. In short, they refused to pay their notes on the 27th of February, having obtained an Order

in Council to do so. "Well," you will say, "but the holders of the notes sued them for payment, did they not?" No, faith! for an act of parliament was soon afterwards passed to protect the Bank Company against all such suits of their creditors, and to screen them from the effects of their having violated the law!—This protection and this screening has been carried on, by divers acts of parliament, *from that day to this*; and, though it is written upon every Bank note, that the Bank will pay so much, or so much to the bearer on demand, it does not mean that it will pay him one single shilling in *Gold or in Silver*, but that it will give another note, or other notes, in exchange! And, yet (hear it, oh, Englishmen!) when you ask for a Reform of the Commons', or People's, House of Parliament, you are called wild, visionary, misguided, and, above all things, you are called *innovators*!

Now then, without going any further, what have the corrupt to say? Will they say, that these are *not innovations*? Will they say, that *time* and a change of circumstances have rendered these innovations necessary? And, if they say this, why do they cry out against us for proposing what *they call* an innovation? For, if we were to allow it to be an innovation, why should our proposal be rejected upon that ground, seeing that no other alteration of the laws and usages of the country has ever been objected to with success upon that ground? The whole history of the Bank Stoppage will be contained in my little book (the first number of which will be published next week) called **PAPER AGAINST GOLD**; but, I have here given enough of fact to show what the nature of that memorable transaction was, and also enough to make good the allegations contained in the eleventh paragraph of our petition.

It is very curious, that the surrender, or rather, the dropping of *Lord Camden's great Sinecure*, should have been announced directly after the presenting of the Hampshire Petition. I do not mean to say, that one was produced by the other;

but, certainly the surrender has been produced by the petitions of the people. However, it is an *abolition* of all Sinecures, and all pensions and grants, not fully merited by well-known public services; this is what we pray for; and, I am fully persuaded, that this is what we shall very soon see take place.

In the mean while, I hope we shall not slacken in our efforts. Nothing but a radical Reform of the parliament can, I am convinced, save our country from utter ruin. In pursuing this subject, it is necessary, that our Petitions be in *decorous language*, in order that those who present them may meet with no obstacle in doing it. And, I advise my countrymen to have nothing to do with any *Political Clubs*, any secret *Cabals*, any *Correspondencies*, but to trust to *individual exertions* and *open meetings*. In speaking of the *Hampden Club* lately, I could only mean the one in London. There are very worthy and zealous men, belonging to such Clubs; but, I shall be very difficult to be made believe, that they are thus employing themselves in the best and most effectual way.

If those, who differ from us would treat us *fairly*; if they would differ from us like *friends*, we should bear with their opposition with patience; but, the far greater part of them treat us like dogs; their words seem to say, that they would kick us, if they could. As a wide contrast with the language of these men, let me beg your attention to a passage of the speech, delivered last night by *Earl Grosvenor*, in the House of Lords:—"On the fourth point, that of Parliamentary Reform, he would also explicitly state his opinion—he had always been led to think, that the last plan proposed to Parliament by that distinguished character, who had rendered so much service to his country, the late Mr. Pitt, was one that might be adopted with great benefit to the country; and, if a Bill, containing a plan of that description should reach that House, it would have his support. With regard, however, to Universal Suffrage, he would not be so uncivil as to call it universal

" nonsense, but he would call it *universal impracticability*; and in regard to *Annual Parliaments*, which some thought "most constitutional, he had never so read "the constitution; he had always considered, indeed, the *annual holding* of "Parliaments necessary to the preservation "of the Constitution, but *not an annual dissolution and re-election of them*. "But because he differed with others on "that subject, was he therefore (as was "well expressed by a Noble Person on "a former evening, in a most eloquent "and convincing speech) to wish to see "those with whom he differed, imprisoned "and gibbeted 'hung, drawn and quartered?' Was he to wish to see a "Judge Jefferies, or one acting in the "spirit and power of a Judge Jefferies, "placed on the Bench, for the purpose "of committing a *legal murder* on these "people? For instance, should he wish to "see Major Cartwright, whom he under- "stood to be a most respectable person, "because he entertained such contrary "sentiments, and endeavoured to propa- "gate them through the country, should "he wish to see his mouth closed, not by "argument and fair discussion, but by the "bloody hands of an executioner?—The "thought was shocking, monstrous and di- "abolical. In regard to Triennial Par- "liaments, however, he must fairly own "that since he turned his thoughts of late "more particularly to the subject, from "the anxiety pervading all ranks of peo- "ple on those topics, he has satisfied "himself they were more constitutional "than septennial ones; and, indeed, he "must in truth say, that he considered the "Septennial Act a direct infringement on "the Constitution, and a violation of the "rights and liberties of the people. Indeed, "he thought if justifiable at all, it could "only be so from the danger of the times; "the danger of a disputed succession; "and that as the danger passed away, "it of necessity fell to the ground. The "Act repealed itself, and ought not to re- "main in the Statute Book. Therefore he "would not shrink from declaring that it "might possibly fall to his lot to intro- "duce a motion on this subject, though

" it was more likely he would be antici- "pated by the introduction of it into the "other House of Parliament, to which "these subjects more particularly belong. "As the fortitude of the people had been "great under their difficulties and priva- "tions, and sufferings, so had their con- "duct in all places, where meetings for "retrenchment and reform had been held, "been most exemplary; and indeed it was "remarkable, and even surprising, that it "should have been so, considering the great "numbers that have been assembled in "various places, and the warmth that na- "turally arises in large bodies when as- "sembled from various quarters to dis- "cuss matters, where grievances are felt. "This was at least no symptom of disaf- "fection, and he trusted from such patient "discussion much good would arise. The "great anxiety he felt for the genuine "characteristic purity and excellence of "the British Constitution made him ear- "nest in pressing these points on their "Lordships' notice; and he sincerely "hoped that the splendour of this bright "political luminary, that had been par- "tially dimmed by the mists of error "and abuse, would be allowed, ere long, "to re-assume its ancient dignity and "glory! !"

This is language such as becomes an English nobleman to make use of towards the English people. I differ from his lordship; but, it is with great and un- grudging respect that I differ from him. I think, that when his Lordship has read the Hampshire Petition, he will hesitate before he again declares Universal Suffrage to be *impracticable*. But, at any rate, this is friendly and conciliating language; it is such as we *must* pay attention to, and hear with respect. His lordship leaves the door open for discussion and reconciliation. He does not draw himself up into an hostile position and set us at defiance.

He himself declares, that *Septennial Parliaments are a direct infringement on the Constitution, and a violation of the rights and liberties of the people*. Well, then, the present parliament is a *Septen- nial Parliament*, and it follows, of course,

that the rights and liberties of the people are now violated. His lordship says, that the *Septennial Act* (which I will explain to you another time) repealed itself, and ought not to remain on the Statute Book. If this be so, ought we to be abused in the manner we have been, for complaining of the thing as it stands?

His lordship has all our thanks for his manly justification of our conduct at the numerous public meetings; and, what a blow does his lordship give to our calumniators! What an answer does this give to those, who were posting up bills to *censure* the people of Hampshire against going to the County Meeting, and who, in those bills, told the people, that *riot and bloodshed* had been produced by such meetings in other places? You will bear this in mind, my friends and neighbours. You see, that there are Noblemen, who, though they differ from us in opinion on some points, will, nevertheless, not consent to hear us abused and vilified, and will not sit in silence while any thing shall be done to stifle our voices, as long as we act in strict obedience to the laws.

How foolish the *busy bodies* in Hampshire, and particularly about Farnham and Droxford, must look, when they read this speech of **LORD GROSVENOR!** There is one man, near Bursledon, on the Titchfield side, who, I was informed, told the people about him, that, if any of them got hurt by going to the meeting on Portsdown, *he* would take care they should have no relief from the *parish*. This was pretty impudent; but, before it be long, you may have some particulars about that man, and some others also. If they are resolved to belie and persecute the people, it shall go hard but we will find the means of facing them. Give us, according to our old English maxim, "*a clear stage and fair play.*" and then, if we are beaten, we will put up with it quietly; but, if our enemies will insist upon our fighting foul, they will have better luck than any persecutors of Englishmen ever had before, if they have not cause to repent it in the end.

I remain, my worthy countrymen,
Your friend,
Wm. COBBETT.

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